A la Carte: Putting Music on the Educational Menu

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West Charlotte High School-*Project L.I.F.T. Academy*

This curriculum unit is recommended for Literacy Internship, Foundations of English I, Fundamentals of Composition, English I, English II, Literature and Film, Creative Writing

Keywords: Characterization, Linguistics, Rap, Music, Literacy, Lyrics, Composition

Teaching Standards: See Appendix 1 for teaching standards addressed in this unit.
Unit Resources and Supplements: Appendix 2

Synopsis: Often, music serves as the connective tissue to many factions and events in our personal and professional lives. During holidays, we often celebrate, commemorate and praise each other through anthems and memorial tunes. Special events and activities, such as sports games and political events, are typically accompanied by team inspiring or subtle instrumental tones. Finally, this tends to be a medium that many of us indulge in when enjoying personal, leisure and even family time. The vast array of creative methods employed during the music making process continues to be something that progresses with time. Along with the methods of creation, the practical usages of music have also evolved to a phenomenal extent. Sesame Street is, perhaps, one of the oldest tv shows that incorporates the utilization of music to relay educational concepts to students. In fact, Sesame Street paved the way for hits shows like Barney, Blues Clues, the Wiggles, and Yo Gabba, Gabba. Though this highly engaging and effective method for teaching young children is necessary and appreciated, it does not negate the fact that applications for this tool at more rigorous levels is extremely rare. Except for platforms like Flocabulary and the newly released Ear Sketch, very few musical avenues for learning exist for students in the high school or collegiate levels. The CTI Unit *"A la Carte: Putting Music on the Educational Menu"* offers high school educator resources for incorporating music into the classrooms that will promote increased engagement, offer tools for refining learning, and assist in improving classroom management efforts.

I plan to teach this unit in the Spring of 2020 to (**50**) *students in English I.*

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Turned Tables: "A la Carte: Putting Music on the Menu"

By Albertia A. Burgess

Introduction

West Charlotte High School is one of the most historically impactful schools in the county. Additionally, we are one of the leaders in minority servitude, with low-income students acting as our largest economic population (U.S. News & World Report, 2018). Our student body often pushes the boundaries of 1800 and is, normally, not less than 1500. The Title I status of our institution affords every pupil free breakfast and lunch, taking a huge strain off families. Financial hardships faced by our students have also encouraged fee waivers for sports and college applications. Unsurprisingly, some financial difficulties can also lead to gaps in the classroom, so West Charlotte High School has consistently implemented after school tutorials, academic centered clubs, and summer initiatives that focus on closing achievement gaps, raising test scores, and better preparing our students for life after high school. One of our most recent endeavors is the "***Dub Summit: LITerature, LITeracy & LanguAGE***," a platform for student voice and medium for creating exposure and training opportunities.

College and career readiness are a central focus for our facility and have been outlined in our school improvement plan for the three consecutive years. While we are continuing to seek improvement and increase educational opportunities for our population, we are still relatively low on the achievement ladder (Great Schools, 2018). Various factors contribute to findings such as this and these variables are of an inconstant nature. From a theoretic approach, ratings, rankings, and scores are most closely related to opportunity myth factors and the absence of rigor in the classroom. The academic challenge that should be present in the academic environments of minority students is simply not there. Researchers from California State University have confirmed in many instances that this lack of exposure leaves minority students at-risk for graduating late, repeating coursework, and dealing with low marks (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005).

At the start of the 2019 school year, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools rolled out documentation evaluating the opportunity myth and what it implies for many students. According to the data within the report, achievement rates of students of color where very similar to those of white students when exposed to the grade level content, high teacher expectations. While it was disheartening to learn that so many diagnostic reports and assumptions about student learning were erroneous, it was refreshing to learn that students in such fragile and compromising social and economic environments could do so much more than what we had ever anticipated. This kind of information put many educators, like me, on the path to discovering and trying new ways to advance students.

Rationale

"RIP, RIH, Sleep in Peace, and Rest Easy" are common acronyms and phrases in everyday communication and conversations amongst our students. A deeper search for comparable articles will reveal stories about some of our students carrying weapons on campus, engaging in large brawls, partaking in car theft, and, using drugs (Bryant, 2016). Some of our students end up with mugshots, some with ankle bracelets, and, unfortunately, some in caskets. This sad reality, violent and crime-related deaths of family and friends, is not one that is easy to curve or justify. Research surrounding recidivism attributes this information to a lack of career exposure, training and experience. Many incarcerates complain that they fear being released into communities in which they are unprepared to survive in. For some, when this is the case, it is almost impossible not to return to at-risk behavior to meet their most basic needs. The causes and effects of recidivism, in addition to implications of the school to prison pipeline, are often related to lost or missed educational and occupational opportunities. After high school, free, mandated educational advancement is unheard of.

Establishing a commonality is one way to create meaningful relationships. However, finding something familiar between two unfamiliar entities can be complex. Music, though, is almost a guaranteed way to bring people together. Even if musical preferences differ, a simple love for this art can be enough to bridge gaps between people. This practice can also be observed and utilized in the classroom. Though students may not listen to the same type of music, many of them are able to acknowledge and appreciate the underlying benefits of musical compositions. In a recent conversation with a friend, we both recalled some of the earliest songs we remembered as youths. To our surprise, we began singing the "Smoke-Free Class of 2000" theme song. This was the way our chorus leader and teachers taught us the dangers of smoking, while celebrating our graduating class. Even beyond my elementary years, instructors implemented various songs and rhythmic verses to help us retain skills and strategies. For example, many of us can recite some rendition of "Please excuse my dear aunt Sally" as an early mathematical pneumonic device. Despite the ease of recollection and effectiveness of this type of resource, music does not have a constant position in the classroom. Instead, teachers often sporadically incorporate this medium into their lessons and classroom objectives.

Abundant evidence-based research exists in support of the use of music in the classroom to support metacognition, socio-emotional well-being, classroom management, and content mastery. The most critical issue with music in the classroom is the lack of such, especially for students performing at more rigorous levels. The "A la Carte: Putting Music on the Educational Menu" goes beyond the scope of prescribing music for specific academic tasks and goals. This unit also offers a compilation of music productions, meant to highlight various elements of literacy and language. By creating the lyrical compositions, I was able to be very specific in how each track addresses educational goals, connects with the listener and aids in the mastery of classroom content.

Implementation of Schoolwide Goals

Students will gain exposure to strategies and skills used schoolwide, in addition to objectives in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCoS). Project-based learning, AVID, and student-to-text connections are three schoolwide goals rooted in the "A la Carte…" curriculum. In terms of project-based learning, students will create their own literature-based music compilation in small groups. The AVID elements of writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reporting are elements that must be considered and included when creating lyrics and music projects. Lastly, student-to-text connections encourage our students to consider composing pieces that are meaningful to them and their peers by addressing issues and direct relevance or concern. Students will explore this curriculum using music intended to mend, build, and reflect on relationships and experiences.

Unit Goals

The revised North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCoS) will be the most critical objectives used to decide the level of rigor and analysis students aim for in terms of mastery. However, students will also be emerged in content that addresses the College and Career Readiness Standards. The EVAAS data released for West Charlotte High School from 2017-2019 indicates our school's achievement rate for the SAT, PSAT and ACT are and have been in the negative percentile. What this implies is that our school is not preparing our students for national merit-based testing. For this reason, I think it is critical to ensure classroom learning objectives align with both state and national standards. Furthermore, WCHS has a 2019 school wide initiative for every teacher to address the collegiate and occupational standards in their classrooms.

Content Research

The "Time Travel: Using Music to Explore Past, Present and Future Messages" seminar led by Dr. Jasmine Corbett was instrumental in developing this course. Though I spent quite a bit of time outside of class creating tracks and investigating material, much of the interconnective tissue surfaced from seminal meetings, discussions, assignments, and activities. Dr. Corbett and my fellow classmates created an environment conducive for exploring and connecting with music for the purpose of: refining learning, encouraging engagement, making personal connections, and mastering the content objectives.

Lullaby's are a well-known method for soothing babies (Zhao & Kuhl, 2016). Some refer to this usage of music as state-changing (McGill Ph.D., 2018). Just like getting a baby to go from crying to quietly listening, music in the classroom can encourage, and even guide, behavioral changes. "Go Noodle!" This catch phrase is one that tells students in many classrooms to get up and DANCE! The use of music to shake up behavior was employed by the makers of "Go Noodle" to reawaken student interest and promote brain functionality (Lotta, 2015) Within the text "Engaging Practices" (2018), McGill explains how music can be used within the classroom

for a purpose like that of the lullaby, state changing. McGill suggests integrating activities that are indicated by various tracks, such as those that signal a transition or allow for student collaboration. For example, when students begin to show low engagement and physical energy, a sound like "Happy" is a great option for re-energizing the class (Williams, 2013). In addition to the various uses implicated by McGill, further research indicates more rigorous uses for music, such as the background or premise for writing. In report by Kelsey Tarbert (2012), "rhythm, discrimination of auditory elements, and visual focus" are some of the basic benefits of music in the classroom.

"Musical interventions may become an appealing approach for schools that are increasingly facing a challenge of supporting education processes and development of children with varied degrees of learning and behavioral difficulties (Dumont, Syurina, Feron, & Van Hooren, 2017)." As stated in the rationale, West Charlotte High School is one that is currently facing academic challenges and deficiencies. Therefore, we must employ, with diligence, strategies the promote student achievement and academic progress. When used responsibly, music can expose students to standard, cultural and tier three vocabulary term in an effortless, convenient manner. For example, the track "Us" from our classroom SoundCloud discusses relationships. Within this song, students are exposed to both formal and informal terms of endearment, while listening to a witty relay of one couple's dealings (MsAlbertiaB, Us, 2019)

From a cultural standpoint, music has not always served popular positive purpose. In black communities the introduction of trap music, gangster rap, and other subgenres of hip hop has encouraged some listeners to take on lives of crime, violence, hate, and self-degradation (Saengian, 2008). Even more alarming, some sources attribute higher rates in STDs, unplanned pregnancy and HIV to the "message in the music" (Saengian, 2008). Though some artists have attempted to produce music that promotes positivity, the popularity and frequency of usage tend to reduce the effectiveness of such compositions. This unit seeks to increase the popularity and usage of positive music by integrating it in the student's day-to-day activities, to include learning and leisure. Creating music that offers more than strategy and skill focused reiteration, ensures students can enjoy supplemental tunes that meet the standards of their preferred choices.

It would be remiss to think that the lyrics attached to each tune are not critical elements of song selection. Listeners of all ages get attached to both the melody and moral in each tune. Responsible song makers must make a conscious effort to produce material that will promote the advancement and progress of the patron. Educational music should offer no less and be available to just as vast an audience as leisure music. Moreover, research into this topic further implies that educational goals should be intentionally embedded and included when creating meaningful pieces. Students in all communities deserve the opportunity to learning critical content from all available avenues in their lives. Education should not be limited to schoolwide resources, but should also be incorporated into recreational activities, fellowship opportunities, leisurely activities, and personal time.

"A la Carte: What's on the Menu?

Understanding the Menu

The "A la Carte" project centers on using music to reinforce and introduce literacy concepts, skills, and terminology. The inspiration for this project comes from students and their need to recite the songs they are most connected to. When discussing why some students choose the music they do, the message is often the culprit. Often, students are memorizing and, in some cases, practicing the actions within the lyrics. As an educator who constantly fears the negative impact of song lyrics on students, I became very interested in curbing that impact with my own music compilations. There are several key tracks in the "A la Carte" unit, to include: *"It's Mnemonic", "Speaking Figuratively", "STEAL", "Plot"," Test Prepping" and a series of tracks dedicated to the elements of a short story*. Each musical piece supports the NCSCoS objectives and can be accessed from a free, online music library, SoundCloud. <u>Appendix 1</u>

It's Mnemonic
Serving as one of the first songs students will be exposed to, this track teaches students the terminology associated with using acronyms and sound devices to master content. Accompanied by the beat from J.J. Fad's "Supersonic," "It's Mnemonic" serves as an excellent way to recite and recall a wide array of classroom strategies and content skills. Some of the strategies reviewed in this composition are: STEAL (characterization), LITSISTER (elements of a short story), and RINSE (vocabulary decoding) (MsAlbertiaB, It's Mnemonic, 2019).

The Elements of a Short Story
In short, these elements translate to the common core state objectives relating to: citing evidence, analyzing characterization, identifying theme, and determining perspectives.

Steal: Characterization
This track gives students a brief overview of eight elements of characterizations and examples of various components of subject analysis. For example, this song kicks off with, "Speech, thoughts, emotions, and actions! Add looks to it, give the story some traction," a catchy phrase that students can utilize when trying to determine what to look for when evaluating character. Another key line from this songs chorus line is, "…character traits that help you understand the things that motivate the path that the characters in the text take, why they interact and keep relationships intact." This line reminds students that relationships, interactions, and motivation go hand in hand with the five basic traits (MsAlbertiaB, Steal..., 2019). The target NCSCoS objectives for this activity are RI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4.

Imagery & Speaking Figuratively

These two compositions focus on the use of literary devices in literature.

"Be creative with the terms you use but leave the reader a few context clues." Subtle reminders such as this help students refine their understanding of literary devices in a format that they are familiar with. "Using idioms effectively, through a few clichés in to talk to me. It went over my head, like you're pulling my leg. I was spoon fed everything that was said." This is one example of how various terms and concepts are defined and modeled within this song (MsAlbertiaB, Speaking Figuratively, 2019). The target NCSCoS objectives for this activity are RI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4.

While most of the other classroom tracks focus on multiple concepts, "Imagery" is dedicated to imagery only. "Whewww! Aye yo is that you? The fragrance in the air is a great clue! I feel like Drake, smell defeat, too! The scent is one hard to get accustomed to!" Serving as one of the many witty lines within this song illustrating the use of imagery to describe lyricism (MsAlbertiaB, Imagery, 2019). The target NCSCoS objectives for this activity are RI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4.

Plot: Story Development

This is by far the most concept packed track of the series. Covering all five elements of story structure, "Plot: Story Development" also attempts to define the concepts and character types within the body of the track. "After that the rising actions begin, they don't resolve the conflict, but get you closer to it. The climax put you in the middle of it. By now you have a good idea what the characters get." One of the key features of this song is the usage of a variety of language to explore structure (MsAlbertiaB, Plot: Story Development, 2019). The target NCSCoS objectives for this activity are RI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4.

Not See Nazi

In addition to using music to explore literacy concepts and core skills, students will also explore teacher created tracks that review social issues and content topics. "Not See Nazi" is one of several tracks written for this very purpose. I was able to see considerable success with this tactic during the first quarter of the 2019 school year. Prior to beginning our Holocaust unit, students were given a sheet of paper and told to record all the concepts and ideas that stick out to them in the song. Most students were able to listen to the song and pull out many of the main idea and supporting details of the lesson we were heading into. Afterwards, students investigated the Holocaust unit using materials from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's online repertoire. We

also read "With a Mighty Hand" and "The Nazi Hunters" to further our study. We also utilized portions of Artie Spiegelman's "Maus" to get an idea of how primary sources survived the Holocaust. After our investigation, students created main idea posters, reviewing various portions of the texts we studied. This activity allowed us to identify the key focus of both main ideas and supporting details within each piece of literature. Being able to identify language specific to war, Semitism, foreign affairs, and religion are also critical components of the "Not See Nazi" track. "Oh Jonah" is another music track that reviews classroom literature (MsAlbertiaB, Not See Nazi, 2019). The target NCSCoS objectives for this activity are RI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4.

To My Sons
Though students need resources to help them master skills and literacy concepts, they also need opportunities to reflect on societal issues and concerns. In the past three years, large initiatives have been made to improve the socio-emotional well-being of students and encourage positive choices. The recent surge of youth death at the hands of law enforcement has placed an urgent need on a venue for expressing concerns and learning about law enforcement. As an educator my primary goal is to keep my students safe. Therefore, songs like "To My Sons" remind students of the dangers of non-compliance with law enforcement. "Put your hands up, get on the ground, turn your car off and roll your window down." While this line tends to be one that stirs students, it makes the face the reality of what must occur for the law enforcement to feel safe keeping you safe. One of the greatest rewards of a music track like this is the endless class discussion it could lead to. Many students will have stories to share, while others will pose questions. Either way, this gateway brings police brutality and victim non-compliance to the forefront of class conversation. Other songs that address similar sentiments are, "Nahhh" and Social Media" (MsAlbertiaB, To My Sons, 2019) The target NCSCoS objectives for this activity are RI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4.

Blue Magic
When teaching rhetoric, teacher created tracks like these are wonderful resources. The use of lyricism is only one part of the rhetoric in these songs, as they both incorporate sampled music from other artists. Though the music is catchy, both tracks open the floor for conversations around plagiarism, paraphrasing, sampling and recurring themes. Students will be able to discuss the use of these devices within the music (MsAlbertiaB, Blue Magic, 2019). The target goals for this activity are NCSCoS RI 9.1-9.5, W9.2-9.4, L9.1-9.2, and SP/L 9.4-9.6

Body of Christ

Since every student has factions of their lives that reflect their family and/or personal choices, it is also necessary to introduce them to music used for building character through cultural elements. The "Body of Christ" features a former student of West Charlotte High School who needed a way to celebrate and share his religious experiences and feelings. Other songs that exemplify cultural character building are: "Attitude of Servitude" and "BHF: Blessed & Highly Favored." Tracks like this are necessary so students know it's okay to celebrate the various attributes of their personal lives (MsAlbertiaB, Body of Christ, 2019). The NCSCoS of focus are RL 9.1-9.5, SP/L 9.4-9.6 and W9.2-9.4

Test Prepping

Many students decide to cram the night before a test, which is not recommended. Despite the suggestion, loads of scholars still choose to employ this practice prior to assessments. Music that helps students review tested material can be of great use and much more effective that simply reading notes or literature. The "Test Prepping" track gives students a tool for memorizing the three anchor testing strategies for our class: RINSE, Plus Two, and LITSISTER. By listening to this song, students can easily memorize the strategies, their purpose, and the steps for executing each (MsAlbertiaB, Test Prepping, 2019). The NCSCoS of focus are RI 9.1-9.5, SP/L 9.4-9.6 and W9.2-9.4

Student Music Project

To encourage self-reflection and creativity, student often write stories and create illustrations. While these are awesome options, the creation of music offers students an opportunity to utilize a variety of skills to narrate a story and connect with their audience in a meaningful way. This component of the unit requires students to attack a set of tasks that, collectively, form one larger project. See Appendix 2 for a listing of more resources and supplements to go with the activities below.

Determine Your Focus

The first portion of the project is content selection. Students should decide what story they want to tell or review. Students should not be required to create their own stories unless they are comfortable doing so. Students who do not wish to relay a personal story can tell the story of a character they are familiar with. Also, students should not be forced to create true tales. Personal stories should always be the choice of the author.

Investigate and Collect Data

During this step, students will use the classroom strategies to record the key details of the story of their choice. Students should make sure they have identified clear main idea, the characters involved, a distinct setting and any issues. Students will also make a listing of synonyms they can use to replace and alternate with their key terms and ideas.

Organize Your Information

During this stage, students will investigate various rhyming patterns by studying different types of poetry and musical pieces. By observing the methods employed by other writers, students will be able to determine how to organize their own information using a rhyme scheme. Students will select artists and tracks that utilize a style that they are most comfortable with mimicking.

Add Rhythmic Elements to Your Information

Students will finalize their rhythmic choices during this stage of writing and practice reciting their lines. Additionally, students will revise their pieces as necessary, checking for clarity and cohesion. The chorus, which reviews the main idea of the song, should also be created prior to or during this stage. Students will ensure all pieces are 1-3 minutes.

Practice Your Lyrics with Background Music

Before recording their composition, each student, or student pair, should practice reciting their track to their selected music. Students should keep the elements of music in mind, adhering to a strict rhyme pattern and story flow. Students will also use this time to ensure their lyrics mesh with their song, ex: slower tunes need slower instrumentals. Students will also make sure they have access to online sources used for music creation, such as Sound Trap, YouTube, and SoundCloud.

Record Your Composition

This is the final step in the student music project, unless students wish to make music videos. For this portion, the objective is to create a product that students can enjoy, reflect and build on. Students will use the SoundCloud platform to publish and share their music. Use the program features, we will create a playlist with all the student work and participate in listening sessions.

Pacing and Lesson Planning

The "A la Carte" menu serves best as a supplement to units that incorporate one or more of the main ideas of the music tracks. For example, when teaching imagery, the "Imagery" and "Speaking Figuratively" songs are great companions. Below are some suggested applications and activities.

Example: Lesson Plan
*Activity: **Characterization Map***
Analyzing characterization is one of the key elements of the NCSCoS. Students must be able to identify the key character traits as relayed through various types of language and how these traits contribute to the motivation, interactions, and relationships of the characters. To practice subject investigation, students will read excerpts from "Maus". The target NCSCoS objectives for this activity are RI 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4. See [Appendix 1] for a complete listing of applicable NCSCoS objectives.

NCSCoS	SWBAT	Agenda

RL 9.1-9.4	Students will be able to identify the five basic character traits by analyzing language and determine how these traits contribute to:
	❖ How the characters interact with other characters and themselves
	❖ Why the characters are motivated to, or not to, do and say things
	❖ The relationships between characters
		Do now: Board Questions:
		   1. What is a character?
		   2. What are the key elements of characterization?
		Focus: Characterization, Theme, Personification
		Statement of Objectives
		Students will practice identifying the key elements of characterization by analyzing the subjects of Art Spiegelman's "Maus"
		Teacher Input:
		❖ STEAL notes for the basic elements of characterization
		❖ Definition of theme, main idea, supporting detail, and personification
		❖ Recap Holocaust related text to build background
		Guided Practice:
		❖ Show students a short clip explaining comics as literary genre.
		❖ Allow students to view more examples of comic narratives
		  ➢ Frederick Douglass comic
		  ➢ Archie (Sunday paper archives)
		  ➢ Superhero comics
		❖ Show students one episode of "Dinosaurs" the 90's hit TV show. Explain how the producers use personification and satire to shed light on societal issues.
		❖ Explain that our featured text will utilize both comics and personification but will be absent of satire
		❖ Play the music track: STEAL: Characterization aloud
		  ➢ As students listen, have them record the key elements of characterization. Repeat the track once to aid in notetaking
		  ➢ Have students recite the keys to tracking characters as indicated by the track
		    ▪ Use this review as an opportunity to fill in gaps by explaining concepts, unraveling confusing and adding missing elements.
		Independent Practice
		❖ Give students a listing of the characters in the text
		❖ Using the audiobook, allow students to listen to the novel and collect notes on the traits of each character
		❖ Allow students to form small groups based on their character selections. Each group will share out their findings and create a visual representation of the character and corresponding traits.
		❖ Give feedback to each group on strengths and weaknesses in their character
		❖ Plan the next practice opportunity to improve initial outcomes.
		❖ Determine needs for reteaching

Example: Re-teaching Plan

Learning the key elements of the Holocaust can be difficult for first time learners. So, students will use the "Not See Nazi" track to review the central focus, key people, places and things of the event.

Mini-Lesson: Thematic Personification	*Activity: Holocaust Overview: "Not See Nazi" Analysis*

NCSCoS: RL 9.1-9.4
Students will refine their understanding of language, central focus and the structure of the Holocaust by reviewing the "Not See Nazi" track.
	❖ *Tell students that they will listen to a music track and pull the elements of the Holocaust from the composition*
	   ➢ *Refer to the characterization activity as review*
	❖ *Teacher will give students tips on things to listen for:*
	   ➢ *People*
	   ➢ *Dates*
	   ➢ *Actions*
	   ➢ *Artifacts*
	   ➢ *Places*
	❖ *Students will repeat track once*
	❖ *Allow students to share out their findings and CONNECT each to content from the text (Maus)*

Example: Skill Practice

Using music as a medium, skills practice can become an extremely challenging, yet exciting task. During this activity, students will use the "Grease Challenge" track to identify various types of figurative language and literacy devices used throughout the track. Students will use the "Speaking Figuratively" track as a brief refresher

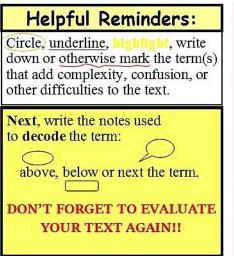| *Track Tracking RI9.1-9.2* |
|---|
| Please listen to the following track: "Speaking Figuratively" and take note of various figurative language types. Next, listen to the "Grease Challenge" keeping track of the following:
   ✓ Similes and Metaphors
   ✓ Hyperbole
   ✓ Idioms/Cliché
   ✓ Repetition
   ✓ Assonance/Consonance
   ✓ Alliteration
   ✓ Imagery
   ✓ Personification |

Assessment Ideas

The "A la Carte" project can be implemented in many ways, so grading usages are dependent on the activity. For example, some music tracks will be used to supplement classroom teaching, while others may be used to measure student retention. Teachers should create their own element specific rubrics to measure mastery of selected objectives. See Appendix 2 for web-based resources for creating rubrics. When creating assessments, instructors are encouraged to use the music tracks to support instruction, rather than be the focus of an assessment. Therefore, assessments should be based on and contain NCSCoS question stems. See Appendix 2 for online formal assessment resources. Perhaps one of the best grading implementations is simple participation.
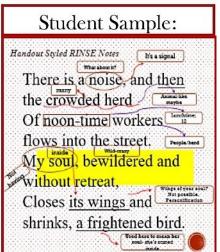
Classroom Resources

R.I.N.S.E

RINSE is an acronym that stands for five steps used to decode difficult vocabulary. In addition, the RINSE strategy encourages students to consider the way an author uses various language to elaborate on or describe other terms in the text. This allows students to track redundancy avoidance and understand word associations. One of the greatest benefits of the RINSE strategy is it allows students to accurately evaluate the use of language for comprehending, analyzing, commenting, and replicating.

How to Decode Difficult Text Using the R.I.N.S.E. Strategy		
R	READ the section of text and REVEAL subject, verb, and modifiers	With no more than ONE paragraph being your target text, carefully read your selected reading
I	IDENTIFY difficult text	Next, skim the text and make note of the terms or phrases that are unknown, complex, or confusing by writing them down, circling, highlighting, or otherwise marking the text.
N	Find NEW terms to replace difficult text	For each term or phrase that you have made note of, find one or more synonyms or synonymous phrases (definitions) that you can use as a substitute for the difficult term. Also, determine how the difficult terms relate to other terms in the text
S	SUBSTITUTE your difficult terms	Replace each difficult term or phrase with the synonym or synonymous phrase to clarify your understanding
E	EVALUATE the text again	Evaluate your new simplified interpretation of the text by READING IT AGAIN WITH YOUR SUBSTITUTIONS.

Plus Two

Being able to figure out the main idea of a text and how its development throughout the course of the literature is a critical literacy skill for all students. When analyzing both state tests (NCFE, EOC's, etc.) and national assessments (PSAT, SAT, ACT, etc.) questions that require the tester to identify the central objective and supporting information tend to account for 30-40% of the overall test (Heimbach, 2017). This percentage does not include specific details from the text that confirm the primary objective or supplemental information, which would bring our percentage, easily, to 50-60%. The problem that many students have is that they have no idea how to find the main idea in a text. So, the Plus Two strategy allows the student practice finding the initial idea presented by the author and the details used to develop that idea through the text b using ONLY 2-3 terms. These terms should always include a subject and a verb. The key principles of Plus Two are finding the who of each section and what about the who is important. Another major element of this strategy is an intentional focus on a variety of terms used to relay, express, describe, respond to, or elaborate on a common issue. This helps the student to extract unobvious context clues from the text, which will help with RINSE, as well.

LITSISTER
Key Elements of ANY TYPE of Literature

	Element	Description
L	**Language** Vocabulary, terms, words	Consider how the author uses: figurative, content specific; ambiguous; unfamiliar, or culture specific terms to get his point across. When writing, add these types of language to get your point across.
I	**Interpretation** Perspective, opinion, narration,	Identify the point of view (1st, 3rd, etc.) used to relay the main idea/issue; consider the position, stance the author takes on the topic. Confirm your observation with textual evidence.
T	**Title** Name, topic, position, role, main idea	The title will NORMALLY relate to the main idea. Several things can be indicated by this story elements; the role of your title depends on the type of text you are reading.
S	**Subjects** Characters, topics, issues, people, things, places, ideas, concepts	And the list of names to replace subjects goes on! The subject of your story is simply the who or what you are focusing on. This is NOT limited to people; in fact, most pieces of informational text use a subject that is nonhuman.
I	**Issues** Topics, conflicts, problems, challenges, subjects, concerns	Looks a lot like subjects, huh? Yes, these two tend to overlap in many genres. Your issue is simply the what to your who. Once you determine the who (subject) of your text, you can spot the what (issues or things your focus on) about your subject.
S	**Structure** Plot, organization, build, creation, development	This can be a complex element, because it has to be considered on multiple levels. One, structure will always be composed of the beginning, middle and end of a text. So, be sure you know plot structure. But, you must also know what things the author does to build or develop certain parts of the text. Here's where rhetoric overlaps with structure. Think about what features the author utilizes to tell his story or give information in various parts of the text.
T	**Theme** Moral, lesson, main idea, supporting details, topics, subjects, heading, name	Themes are mostly for fiction text and tend to be in statement form. This is what the author wants you to learn about a specific topic. In nonfiction and many other texts, however, theme becomes main idea. When determining either, be sure to track the supporting details the author adds to build the theme/main idea. Remember, this concept MUST be repeated through the use of textual details to qualify as the theme or main idea. Looks for examples, definitions, antonyms, and synonyms as possible support for your main idea/theme.
E	**Environment** Setting, location, place, date, time, culture, weather, land	Environments can be hard to determine in a text, so be on the lookout for any clues, such as: dates, times, land formation, geographical features, landmarks, weather, language, food, and dress. Also, beyond knowing the setting, you should also consider the effects or impact. Does the setting make the story scarier or happier? Is your environmental issue affect a specific population? Which nations were affected by the historical event you are investigating? ;
R	**Rhetoric** Craft, style, swag, uniqueness	First and foremost, the only thing the author cannot do is leave out one of the three elements of structure. This would make his story incomplete. Outside of that that author has the freedom to create, manipulate and add literary devices to his pieces as he sees fit. Some of the most common elements of rhetoric or organization, subjects, language, perspective and issues.

LITSISTER

Serving as the final literacy strategy of the unit is LITSISTER. Like RINSE, LITSISTER is also an acronym. However, this strategy does not represent a set of steps; instead, it lists the nine elements that are most essential in the creation of any text. In short, students can use LITSISTER to find what is most important in a piece of literature and as a checkpoint for what their own writing should include. One of the greatest benefits of this strategy is the reinforcement of synonymous language used to represent concepts. For example, students know that plot refers to what happens in the story. Other terms that LITSISTER associates with plot are: organization, structure, development, creation, and textual pattern. By using a variety of language to describe key elements, students are better able to apply the literacy skills across contents and grade levels.

In addition to teaching the strategies (several times to ensure understanding) and issuing students a readily available resource for reference, I also intend to project the strategies on classroom and schoolwide bulletin boards. This will increase the likelihood that students review and re-read the steps, examples, and purpose of each strategy often.

Bibliography

Bryant, E. (2016, February 25). *CMPD, family hope for information in cold case of teen's shooting death*. Retrieved from WSOC-TV: https://www.wsoctv.com/news/local/police-family-hope-for-information-in-west-charlotte-high-student-homicide/115348038
The local news, via radio and television, are great sources for finding current events and community occurrences most relevant to a specific student body. WSOC-TV is one of many that offers up-to-date information. Be sure to check out your local stations.

Dennis, J. M., Phinney, J. S., & Chuateco, L. I. (2005). The Role of Motivation, Parental Support, and Peer Support in the Academic Success of Ethnic Minority First-Generation College Students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 13.
This is a very enlightening text that gives elaborate details on the importance of a variety of abstract and tangible support systems in the classroom.

Dumont, E., Syurina, E. V., Feron, F. J., & Van Hooren, S. (2017). Music Interventions and Child Development: A Critical Review and Further Directions. *Frontiers in Psychology*.
If you need a rationale for incorporating music -- and ideas on how to incorporate -- this is the resource for you! By explaining the various benefits, methodologies, and expected outcomes of using music as a teaching tool, this resource further confirms the advantages of this particular learning mechanism.

Great Schools. (2018, September 10). *West Charlotte High School*. Retrieved from Great Schools: https://www.greatschools.org/north-carolina/charlotte/1300-West-Charlotte-High/#College_readiness

Heimbach, A. (2017, June 8). *The New SAT vs. The New ACT: Full Breakdown*. Retrieved from PrepScholar: https://blog.prepscholar.com/the-new-sat-vs-the-act-a-full-breakdown
When trying to include more rigorous instruction, educators need realistic tools for prepping students for future endeavors. Resources such as this one help instructors to accurately prepare students for the next level(s) of learning. Additionally, these resources can easily be used to draw parallels between current and future learning objectives.

Lotta, B. (2015). *Go Noodle Movement Breaks in the Classroom.* New York: Digital Commons at Brockport.
Go Noodle gives educators one more example of how they can use music during specific intervals to provide activity indicators, give transition cues, and encourage state changes.

McGill Ph.D., C. L. (2018). *Engaging Practices: How to Activate Student Learning.* Colorado Springs: White Water Publishing.
Not all teachers are creative. For this reason, materials that give us ideas on how to add fresh content, strategies and activities to our classroom are often needed. This resource not only gives

strategies for engaging students, but also explains why each is a critical piece in effective instruction. I use this resource quite often.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). Blue Magic [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). Body of Christ [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). Imagery [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.
Perhaps one of my favorite self-created tracks, I think teachers should begin imagery lessons with this song. By allowing students to listen to the content, they are able to view the information in a new way and access it through the use of more convenient tools.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). It's Mnemonic [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). Not See Nazi [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). Plot: Story Development [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.
Teachers should encourage students to listen to this track on their own time as a reinforcement of the elements of structure and story organization.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). Speaking Figuratively [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.
Here is another great track for reinforcing classroom skills. Students, and educators, can use this track to review examples and definitions of figurative language types.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). Steal... [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.
This musical composition allows student an opportunity to review the elements of characterization in a fun way. Teachers can also use this track as an anchor for discussing common/popular character types.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). Test Prepping [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). To My Sons [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.
One of my many content-based tracks, this particular song draws a parallel between classroom content and the world we live in. Use this track when you want to encourage student-to-text connections.

MsAlbertiaB (2019). Us [Recorded by MsAlbertiaB]. Charlotte, NC, USA.

Saengian, K. (2008, June 08). *Research Cites Negative Influences of Hip Hop*. Retrieved from Pittsburg Post-Gazette: https://www.post-gazette.com/life/lifestyle/2008/06/13/Researcher-cites-negative-influences-of-hip-hop/stories/200806130124
While music can play a positive role in the classroom, it would be remiss not to acknowledge potential negative effects. This resource reminds us to be thoughtful when selecting classroom music.

Tarbert, K. (2012). *Using Literacy Through Music.* Decorah: Luther College.

This resource is a great resource for understanding how music can be used to improve literacy skills. Too many stakeholders get confused about whether music in the classroom is for engagement or content mastery. Well, this resource confirms the possibility of both uses.

U.S. News & World Report. (2018). West Charlotte High School. Charlotte, NC, USA.

Williams, P. (2013). Happy [Recorded by P. Williams]. Miami, Florida, USA.

Zhao, C. T., & Kuhl, P. K. (2016). Musical intervention enhances infants' neural processing of temporal structure in music and speech. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the U.S.A.*, 5212-5217.

Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

RI/RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence- *student will use excerpts from texts to support arguments, answer choices, and claims.*

RI/RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme and/or main idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text- *students will use the Plus Two strategy to track the "who and what" of the text and to determine what the text relays about the who in each section.*

RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme- *students will use organizers to track character traits and how these traits contribute to the development of the character, theme, and plot of the text*

RI.9-10.3 Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events including the order in which the points are made- *students will track various patterns of organization and how specific details are addressed in each section of a text.*

RI/RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text- *students will determine how authors avoid redundancy and add variety by using RINSE to find context clues and make word associations*

RI/RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices- *students will analyze various choices authors make in text structure, perspective, characterization, language, and theme/main idea.*

RI/RL.9-10.6 Analyze a particular perspective or cultural experience reflected in a work- *students will analyze cultural impacts on universal themes, subjects, and perspectives; students will also analyze author claims and how these are supported/built throughout a text*

L.9-10.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage- *students will review rules for, find when reading and practice usage of standard English conventions during all reading and writing activities. Conventions will be mini-lessons.*

L.9-10.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language and nuances in word meanings- *students will gain a thorough understanding and ideas for application of more than ten common figurative language types.*

L.9-10.6 Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases- *students will increase their knowledge of tier two terms and tier three terms as they relate to their specific projects*

W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts- *students will create biographical reports using research*

W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences- *students will create various fictitious stories and journal entries during the project cycle and extension activities.*

W.9-10.5 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question- *students will conduct research to complete various components of the project, using scholarly, credible resources*

SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions- *students will engage in back-channeling, Socratic seminars, and other structured discussion panels during theme investigations, characterization breakdowns, supporting detail tracking, structural development, and elements of rhetoric.*

SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely- *students will practice verbal identification of key elements in a text by making a claim, supporting with evidence, and identify the overall purpose of effect that is achieved.*

Appendix 2: Unit Resources and Student Supplements

Graphic Organizers for Characterization
https://www.literacyleader.com/sites/default/files/Character%20Graphic%20Organizers.pdf

"MsAlbertiaB" SoundCloud
http://www.soundcloud.com/msalbertiab

Released Formal Assessment Resources
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/common-exams/released-items/
https://edulastic.com/assessments/
https://www.edutopia.org/stw-yes-prep-lessons-resources-assessment
https://www.commonlit.org/
https://newsela.com/
https://www.khanacademy.org/

Writing Rubrics
http://gncufsd.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_774455/File/For%20Staff/Rubrics/Common_Core_Rubrics_Gr_9_10.pdf
http://www.schrockguide.net/assessment-and-rubrics.html
https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/collection/speaking-and-listening-and-writing-rubrics/

Rubric Generator for Projects and Other Activities
http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/languagearts/
http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php?screen=NewRubric
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum/worldlanguages/resources/aaa/samprc5.pdf